

MEDIA STATEMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 22, 2014

Volunteers Count Whales in Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary

Approximately 900 volunteers gathered data from the shores of O'ahu, Kaua'i, and Hawai'i island during today's annual Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary Ocean Count. The count is a yearly shore-based census that provides snapshot data on humpback whales. Participants tally humpback whale sightings and document the animals' surface behavior during the survey.

Volunteers collected data from 58 sites statewide. A total of 297 whales were seen during the 9:30 a.m. to 9:45 a.m. time period, the most of any time period throughout today's count (58 sites reported data). The calm water conditions were great for spotting whales and other marine wildlife, although conditions were hazy in many areas.

Preliminary data detailing whale sightings by site location is available at:
<http://www.sanctuaryoceancount.org/resources/>

One more Sanctuary Ocean Count is scheduled to take place on Saturday, March 29th. For more information on becoming a Sanctuary Ocean Count volunteer visit <http://hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov> or <http://sanctuaryoceancount.org> or call (808) 268-3087.

The sanctuary which is administered by a partnership of NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and the State of Hawai'i through the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR), protects humpback whales and their habitat in Hawaiian waters where they migrate each winter to mate, calve and nurse their young.

On the Web:

Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary:

<http://hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov>

NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries: <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov>

State of Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources: <http://hawaii.gov/dlnr/>